



Montgomery County, MD  
Commission on People with Disabilities  
Meeting Summary Minutes  
March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**Welcome and Approval of December, 2011, and January, 2012 Meeting Summary Minutes:**

Trish Gallalee, Chair, convened the meeting. Mark Maxin, Commissioner, made a motion to approve the December, 2011 and January, 2012 Meeting Summary Minutes as written. Seth Morgan, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken the meeting summary minutes were unanimously approved as written.

**Accessibility Rating Pilot Project ~ Cathy Raggio, Secretary, Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD); Delegate Bonnie Cullison; Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Montgomery County Health and Human Services (MCHHS); Dr. Jay Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, MCHHS; Anne Blackfield, Director, Maryland Technology Assistance Program:**

The Accessibility Rating Pilot Project is being undertaken by MDOD, Independence Now, and MCDHHS. They would like to partner with CPWD on this project. Through public feedback Delegate Cullison identified a need for information on accessibility features of various public accommodations that people with disabilities frequent. Facilities currently offer a wide range of accessibility, from being fully accessible to not having any accessibility.

Through research of other jurisdictions, a best practice model on how to rate facilities based on their accessibility was developed. Oregon and Washington have facility accessibility rating programs. The voluntary model will allow individuals to rate places that they frequent, such as grocery stores, movie theatres, restaurants and more. The rating system will be a way for people to share information, to raise public awareness and to help our business community become more sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities.

The Global Accessibility Map system, developed by the Rick Hansen Foundation, is a free easy-to-use web application, designed to provide consumers with the opportunity to submit and obtain reviews on the accessibility of buildings and public spaces worldwide. This tool will enable all people to make informed decisions on everyday activities such as where they eat, shop, work, play and access services. It is based on a five-star ratings system and is similar in concept to the consumer reviews commonly found on many travel websites, but with a focus on accessibility criteria. The system rates on five areas of criteria – the entrance, venue pathways, main function, wash rooms and customer service. Star ratings for facilities will be the average rating of all reviews. Users can search for facilities within a certain range of a desired address, with a certain level of accessibility, and within different categories of mobility, auditory and visual access.

Volunteers can be persons with mobility, sight, or auditory disability and their immediate family members. They must be willing to review at least five establishments in Montgomery County and have access to a computer with an internet connection or an iPhone, iPad, Blackberry Torch, or smartphone with Android 2.2 or above on the Opera Mobile browser. Users will create their own usernames and their reviews will be tracked. Volunteers are encouraged to include narratives in their reviews and provide context for their own unique situation. Anne Black will provide technical assistance to volunteers and share solutions if problems arise.

Volunteer training will be held on April 21<sup>st</sup> from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The location will be the Executive Office Building in the lobby level auditorium. Training will provide an overview of the Global Accessibility Map system, allow volunteers to sign up and create usernames, and to discuss a group consensus on the kinds of standards they should rate on. It was suggested that the training address reviewing facilities for all types of disabilities. Data for the project will be gathered between May 1<sup>st</sup> and August 1<sup>st</sup>. The Rick Hansen Foundation has offered to assist with data mining. A final report on the project will be issued by October 26<sup>th</sup>. The goal is to provide public accommodation information for people with disabilities.

**Potomac Community Resources, Inc. ~ Stephen Riley, Executive Director (Commissioner):**

Potomac Community Resources, Inc. (PCR) is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes the inclusion of persons with developmental differences into the life of our community. It was founded in 1994 by a small group of parents who were having difficulty finding resources and quality programs for their teenage and adult sons and daughters with developmental disabilities. PCR became a 501(c) 3 in 2001.

PCR operates 32 programs and provide therapeutic recreational, social, educational and respite care programs for teens and adults with developmental differences. Membership is free. There is a charge for some PCR programs and financial aid may be available. Programs are staffed by experienced professionals. Volunteers offer friendship and assistance. The Tricia Sullivan Respite Care Program offers five hours of fun and therapeutic activities for people with significant care needs and/or those with medical needs, and is available two Sundays a month at the Kennedy Institute and one Sunday a month at the Clara Barton Community Center. There is currently a waiting list for this program due to funding.

PCR's budget is under \$750,000 a year. 10% of their funding is from Montgomery County DHHS. 85% of their funding is from private donations and individual and corporate grants. They have also received a grant from the Montgomery County Council the past few years. PCR holds an annual fundraising dinner that is attended between 500 to 600 people.

PCR also provides technical assistance and support to organizations that want to provide resources in their community and have assisted

DVD presentation about PCR and their services: [www.pcr-inc.org/coming\\_together.asp](http://www.pcr-inc.org/coming_together.asp)

**Schedule A Charter Amendment Update:**

Angela Washington, Ex-Officio Member, Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Manager, Office of Human Resources attended a meeting with the Charter Review Commission to discuss employment issues. She and Ricky Wright, Disability Program Manager, Office of Human Resources were asked to provide information regarding the proposed Schedule A hiring practice for Montgomery County. Angela noted that nationally persons with disabilities have a 70% unemployment rate. Schedule A would enable OHR to identify higher grade level positions including technical, professional and management positions. The CRC is concerned about the level of work that people with disabilities would be able to provide in terms of productivity and attendance. They are also concerned with the costs associated with providing accommodations. Angela explained that the majority of accommodations cost \$500 or less. Managers who have participated in the Customized Employment Internship Project, which hires persons with significant disabilities for part-time positions, have noted that the interns have a high level of productivity as well as high attendance rates. The CRC asked Angela to provide data regarding the current hiring practice and how it has benefited persons with disabilities. She will provide this information and report back to the Commission. Angela noted that Fire and Rescue Services recently advertised firefighter positions. 10 of the applicants were eligible for the hiring preference.

**Chair and Vice Chair Report:**

Trish Gallalee, Chair, attended a meeting with County Executive Leggett to discuss Design for Life Montgomery (DFLM), builder incentives and how to substantially increase the number of homes in Montgomery County that have basic access such as a zero step entrance. Leggett is open to a bill that would create some kind of incentive for single family homes that meet DFLM standards, but needs further information in order to make a decision as to specific components of the legislation. The Commission has been asked to research what other jurisdictions are doing across the country. The State of Virginia now offers tax credits up to \$5,000 for the purchase of a new accessible residence and up to 50% for the cost of retrofitting existing units, not to exceed \$5,000.

The Department of Health and Human Services Director Uma Ahluwalia and senior leadership staff will brief residents and interested parties on the department's portion of the County Executive's recommended Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2013 on Monday, March 19th. The event will begin at 6:00 p.m. in the

auditorium of the Children's Resource Center, located at 332 West Edmonston Drive in Rockville. The County Council will hold public hearings regarding the proposed budget. Residents and Commissioners will be able to testify at those hearings.

Charlie Crawford, Vice Chair, conducts a monthly support group for older individuals who have low vision or are blind. A representative from the Board of Elections spoke to the group about accessible voting options. Charlie has been working with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Access for All Committee regarding WMATA's budget and issues for the future.

Seth Morgan, Commissioner, reported on the Transportation Committee. Mark Loberg, Commissioner, developed a petition that addresses the issues of the 2011 WMATA MetroAccess fare increases that negatively affected populations on a fixed income as well as employed individuals and consumer driven organizations.

The petition is not a Commission action, but Commissioners can sign it as individual citizens. It was suggested that bullet points from the petition be used in a letter asking County Executive Leggett for his support. The issue will be discussed further at the Steering Committee meeting. Marcie Povitsky, Commissioner, has developed a disability parking flyer that will be distributed to CPWD and other Commissions that supported the Respect the Space program [Commission on Aging, Commission on Health, Commission on Veterans Affairs]. Training will be held in the evenings. Dates have not been scheduled yet. Training will be open to Commissioners first, then the public.

**Roundtable:**

Jay Kenney reported that the County Council voted unanimously on March 6<sup>th</sup> to eliminate the County licensing requirements for certain group homes for developmentally disabled adults. The County Council found that the local licensing requirements were duplicative of the state licensing requirements.

**Community Speaks:** None.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

**Next Full Commission Meeting:** Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012 – Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Auditorium, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 – 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**Steering Committee Meeting:** Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012 – 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Tan Conference Room, 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Office Services Coordinator  
Betsy Luecking, Disability Policy Specialist